

Seshendra Sharma

A Poetic Legend



Editor

Dr. V. Kondal Rao



Seshendra, Viswanatha, Indira Devi



Seshendra and others



Seshendra, Agraharam Krishnamurthy and others



Seshendra and others



Seshendra, Indira Devi, Agraharam Krishnamurthy



Seshendra, Kondal Rao and others



Seshendra, Chakuri Rama Rao, K. Nirmala and others



Seshendra and others

SESHENDRA SHARMA

A P o e t i c L e g e n d

Editor
Dr. Velchala Kondal Rao

Published by



VISWANATHA SAHITYA PEETHAM
Sister Nivedita Foundation
11-4-654/3, Red Hill, Lakdi-ka-pul, Hyderabad - 500 004.
Ph : 23396358/23305134

SESHENDRA SHARMA - A POETIC LEGEND

First Published : November, 2007

Editor : Dr. Velchala Kondal Rao

Price : Rs. 200/- \$ 10

For Copies :



VISWANATHA SAHITYA PEETHAM

Sister Nivedita Foundation

11-4-654/3, Red Hill, Lakdi-ka-pul,
Hyderabad - 500 004.
Ph : 23396358/23305134

M/s. VISALANDHRA BOOK HOUSE

4-1-435, Bank Street, Hyderabad - 500 001
All its Branches in A.P.

&
All other leading Book Shops

Printed at :

PARTHASARATHI PRINTERS

Nallakunta, Hyderabad.
Phone : 55108206 / 9246508206

INDEX

Editorial	5
<u>Poems On Seshendra</u>	
Seshendra - Ambika Ananth	10
Royal Swan - Tangirala	11
<u>Articles On Seshendra</u>	
Gunturu Seshendra Sarma - Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti	12
Seshendra Sarma's Modern Mahabharatham - Dr. J. Bapu Reddy	16
My Memory Of Seshendra - Dr Aripirala Viswam	26
The Lived Poetry Of Seshendra Sharma - Prof. J.V. Raghavendra Rao	30
Twilight Language And The Shodasi Ramayana - Prof. M. Siva Ramakrishna	36
A Fusion of Three Disciplines - Prof. B.V.L.Narayanarow	43
A True Comparatist.. - Dr. C. Mrunalini	48
Seshendra Sarma: "Stream Of Multiple Consciousness" - Prof. S.S.Prabhakar Rao	54
Seshendra A Poet Of Sky And Stars - Dr.Pothukuchi Sambasiva Rao	58
Scholar As A Modernist - By Prema Nandakumar	61
Vibrant Trendsetter - Chitrakavi Atreya	65
Symbols In The Poetic Journey of Seshendra - Indira Devi Dhanrajgir	67
Seshendra Sharma - Ambika Ananth	73
Seshendra Sarma Bard of Blazing Consciousness - Prof.S.S. Prabhakar Rao	79
Meet The Author Seshendra - Prof. Indranath Chowdhury	84
Seshendra : Bridge Between The Old And The New -Prof. D. Ramakrishna	87

Trendsetter Of A New Era - K. Venkateswarlu	91
Seshendra : The Poet, My Husband - Indiradevi Dhanrajgir	94
Rare Treat For The Discerned - Gopala Chakravarti	97
India's Octavio Paz - Dena Anangoras	99
Particle of Memory - Elizabeth Kurian 'Mona'	102
<u>Interview</u>	
Road To Poetry : Conversation With Sri G.seshendra Sarma - Subbani Laxmi Narayan	104
<u>Articles Of Seshendra</u>	
Poetry An Odyssey	110
Valmiki To Kalidasa	118
Views On The Complexities Of Time & The Challenges Of The Writer	133
Poverty And Poetry	138
<u>Speeches Of Seshendra</u>	
Poet The Real Supreme Court	142
Purge The Literary Field!	146
<u>Poems Of Seshendra</u>	
My Road	152
Plough	153
Pilgrimage For Peace	154
Mother Land	156
Oceans, Your Saris	157
Full Stop	158
Boats	158
Storm	160
Sentence, A Flute	160
Only One	161
Selections from :	
My Country, My People of Seshendra Sharma	162

SESHENDRA A Literary Giant

- Dr. V. Kondal Rao

The world of literature in general and Telugu literature in particular has lost a literary giant with the death of Sri Gunturu Seshendra Sharma.

He belongs to the 'class' of path breakers, trend setters, pioneers and promoters in literature. In management phraseology, a person like him is called an entrepreneur, an innovator, a discoverer.

He invented a new thought, a new expression and a whole lot of new vocabulary of metaphors, similes and images in Telugu poetry. Gave new meanings to the old and elevated the simple words to be elastic.

He lifted Telugu poetry to new heights by introducing the new forms, modernizing the old norms.

He touched all the genres of poetry. Authored a book on the science and art of poetry by name "Kavisena Manifesto", in which he compared and contrasted all the principles of poetics as propounded from the ancient times to the modern times, quoting extensively from the eastern and western thinkers and writers. In poetic thought he belongs to the "Alankara School" of "Vakrokti", "Dhwani" and "Rasa". He believed that there can't be poetry without Alankara. But he also believed that using the same and the similar alankaras again and again would make poetry outdated and anachronistic. Poetry according to him like romance has to be renewed to be likeable, lovable and relishable. An alankara becomes "Niralankara" according to him if it is repeated and re-used again and again. That is why he always composed his poems with new and ever new alankaras. . That was his uniqueness, and the novelty of his poetry. That way he gave a 'new look' and a new 'out look' to Telugu verse and a new lead to it thereby.

Whether Seshendra handled old themes or new, whether he handled "Public Themes", or the "Private Themes", he did not deviate from the principles of "Alankara Poetics" as he considered 'alankara' as the very life, the very spirit, the very soul of poetry. Irrespective of whatever themes he handled, he always tried to write in unconventional alankaras. That is why we have to say that Seshendra Sharma was basically an "Alankara Poet" and that too a "New Alankara Poet" in the technical sense, but not a "Progressive Poet" in the ideological sense. He wrote all kinds of poetry including "Progressive" poetry. He handled all genres of poetry, both old and the new, but always stuck to his conviction that poetry without the "poetic décor" would amount to writing prose defeating the very aim and purpose of writing it.

Reading Seshendra, one always felt that he belonged to the "Pristine Nature" – to the trees, birds, rivers, valleys, oceans, meadows, greeneries, landscapes and to abundant sunshine, breeze and the shade of the shady trees which he liked, nay loved, admired and adored. To him, the tree represented the true spirit of man, so much so, he said "Man is the walking tree whose roots have changed into legs" and lamented "Had I remained a tree, I could have had a spring every year, having become a man I have lost all the springs on earth".

He was always on his wings to fly and float in the firmament of 'charm' and the 'charming'. Though bodily he lived in Hyderabad, by spirit he was always attuned to Nature. One felt as though he used to have a regular dialogue with all the species in nature. That way, he was basically an aesthetic poet who belonged to 'Nature' like WordsWorth, Shelley, Keats, Emily Dickinson. His eyes always searched for something new in nature and also in man's nature. God bequeathed rare eyes to him to see and say about them uniquely and unconventionally. His distinction was in seeing the things differently. Things to him were not things but oceans with oceanic meanings. He angled for them with his poetic skill. He was a very conscious, cultivated cultured poet. He was of the firm view, nay, of conviction that a poet should first of all write poetry before all else, call it an idea or an ideology. Ideas and ideologies are only secondary to poetry according to him. He vehemently and vociferously stated that the "ideas and ideologies are for the sake of poetry, poetry is not

for the sake of ideas and ideologies". That is why, he can't be categorized as an ideological poet in the 'political sense' but as an idealistic poet in the 'Poetic Sense' as he belonged to the "School of Alankara Poets", that too as has already been said to the school of "New Alankara Poets".

He was basically an "Aesthetic Poet". He could not help being so as a lover of "beauty" and the "beautiful". Even when he wrote progressive poetry, he embellished it with "Alankara" to convert it into alankara poetry. He wrote his whole poetry in the 'alankara form' but not making it abstruse, unintelligible or obscure. He wrote even "Krodha"(anger) in "Rasa". He stressed that whatever you wish to say you have to say it in 'Rasa' but not reduce it to 'Neerasa'. Noise doesn't make poetry according to him but 'voice'. Even a staunch leftist poet of Kerala – Panikkar has Late once said that whether a poet writes on a 'public theme' or a 'private theme' he should write it in a 'private voice' meaning thereby, that poetry should be like an 'echo' but not like a 'sound'.

Seshendra was not only a "New Look Poet" but also a "New Outlook Poet". He gave not only newness to 'form' but also newness to 'norm'.

He was a poet who had his roots in this country, but who did not hesitate to explore and exploit the roots of poetry belonging to other countries. That is why, he kept his routes of learning always open.

"My song, the nomadic song of the stock has
no words but only melodies; gathered rolling
over tongues and countries and peoples –
drinking in any river, breathing the air of every
land". He says in one of his poems.

By reading his "Adhunika Maha Bharatam" in combination with his "Kavisena Manifesto" one gets a feeling that Seshendra wrote the whole lot of his poems to substantiate and authenticate the convictions that he expressed in his Kavisena Manifesto a feeling that he wrote his poetry more to reinforce his views on "Poetics" as stated in it than for the sake of writing poetry per se. He introduced the new forms and styles in his poetry to assert what he had earlier stated about the new forms and norms of in his Kavisena Manifesto.

Those who dub Seshendra as an "Aristocratic Poet" would do well to understand that though Seshendra was in the midst of "Aristocracy" his poetry was not "Aristocratic" but "Romantic" in the highest aesthetic sense of the word. His 'romanticism' was for "beauty" and the "beautiful", not for the "Feudal", or the "Regal".

Seshendra was handsome, and he liked and loved everyone and everything handsome as "Handsome is what handsome does" as the proverb goes. He therefore transformed everything he touched into the handsome.

To deny romanticism in life is like denying the very 'velocity' and 'gravity'. It is the romanticism in life that constitutes one's individuality, entity and identity. Romanticism in life in other words is "Idealism in life". And what is poetry after all, if it has no romanticism and no idealism? Is not "Progressive poetry" also a form of "Romanticism" and "Idealism"? Aiming at many, So many of course not for the few but for the many.

Undoubtedly he belongs to that 'class' of world's great poets to which Pablo Neruda, T.S. Eliot, Walt Whitman and Mykovsky belonged.

In conclusion it can be stated that he was the most modern of the modern poets of his times belonging to any school or genre of poetry.

Here are some gleanings from his poetic album:

I give shapes, forms and voices to rocks and release them from silences.

Time is the paper,

upon which I write the chapter of my dreams for the world,
sculpture a colossus of force out of Man.

Seas are punctuations in the sentence of the earth.

Seas are pots of ink, which the earth uses to write her romances.
Chased away by the human bazaars silence fled into the hills.

Who is flying the flag?

You say it is the wind,

I say it is the hand,

history says it is both.

I am the stream that runs like crowds of pearls.

I may be after all a fistful of the earth,

but when I lift the pen I have the arrogance of the flag of a nation.

My poetry doesn't fly any flag, but my hands are the swords of my nation.

Where are those gods, you fool, who can grant you boons except your own hand –
the magnificent edifice raised by the gorilla over ages –
the fulcrum of human civilization.

I know, you will not excuse me if I am guilty of genius,
but no one ever whispered into my ears before I took my birth
that I should arrive here guiltless.

How good of you to go away happily pocketing the few seconds available, and what a monster I am that I should be breathing turning into a sword, determined to change the course of time!

If I am solidified I am a physical body with
a form and a name,
if I am liquefied I am flow of memories.

I am not present where I was and I am never.
Where I am. The sundry gods give you theories,
I give you wine.

Come, join me and get drunk with what I offer
and wander in the sky like winged gods.

When a bird sings in the branch
I interrupt my daily routine for a moment and
listen with great attention.

That bird alone knows, in my season of poetry
how many glorious words my lips blossomed;
like a branch that ingresses into the
chromosomes of the cells of my being -

Do not ask me why I am so restless
ask the ocean.

Do not ask me why I am so furious,
ask the tempest.

His pen was dipped in manna and magic
To drip words to erase
agony, affliction and pain.
of the world
He distributed the wealth of his poetry
to turn the fallow lands of human hearts
into green lands of fecundity

Seshendra, a blessing to the world
A new era poet
bequeathed himself to the
hearts of people
He was a pathfinder
with loftiness of vision
reaching to the skies,
Wording a Manifesto
full of wake-up calls

Every written word of his
A mirror of his poetic genius
Every poem of his
eternal zone of brilliance

Who says he is gone
when he has left behind
so much light and life
as his legacy...

For the wellness of our souls
We all need God
We all need poets like him too
Who are born very rarely
so creative and scholarly
who played a poetic-symphony
eulogizing the Muse...
Let us celebrate his collected works
the seeds of poetic wisdom
To sprout in our minds
To fill in our breath

He was always an awakened soul
Will he ever sleep in mortal death?

ROYAL SWAN

- Tangirala

From the abode of 'Vishnu' the 'Vaikuntham'
Leaving the sacred mole of His bosom - the 'Srivatsam'
Leaving the eternal gem - the 'Kaustubham'
As if cursed by fate
Appearing in the mortal world,
She is Lakshmi Devi herself
And in the English poetic world,
She is Saraswati herself!
In the life's monsoon of 'Yuga Kavi'
she is the peacock with plumes fully spread!
Drenched in the poetic rays of 'Rashtrendu'
She is the white water lily blossomed!
In our Telugu poet's 'Manasa Sarovara'
She is the Royal Swan regaling !

A Royal birth
Yet a simple, unassuming gentle code of life
Poetess herself and a poet's wife.
When her beloved is breathing fires
She cools him with her smiles.

She has patience of Mother Earth, prudence of Minister
Timmarasu
She is Lady of Royal Heritage
A house-wife of modern age!
In each word
In every move
In normal course of life
She has highest civilized grandeur
Yet a personification of gentle composure!

'Srinatha' transformed as 'Jagannatha'
'Jagannatha' as 'Seshendra'
As a cursed Gandharva
As 'Nava Kavita Pitamaha'
He came to us as an eminent poet
She, a celestial wonderful nymph
Chose him as her consort
She is Gyan Bagh Palace's pervading glow
Seshendra's ever springing poetic flow.
She is Rajkumari
Indira Devi Dhanrajgiri !

(Translated from Telugu by AMBIKA ANANTH)

Articles on Seshendra

GUNTURU SESHENDRA SARMA

- Prof. Bh. Krishnamurti

Professor Gopichand Narang, Vice-President of the Sahitya Akademi, Sri G. Seshendra Sarma, distinguished recipient of the prestigious award of Fellowship of the Sahitya Akademi, Professor Satchidanandan, Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, Smt. Indira Dhanrajgiri, an eminent poet and the better-half of Seshendra, A. Krishnamurti, Regional Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, distinguished invitees, Members of the press and T.V.

As Convenor of the Telugu Advisory Board, I join the Regional Secretary in welcoming you all to this pleasant function. First of all, I want to congratulate my friend, Mahakavi Seshendra Sarma, on receiving the coveted Fellowship of the Central Sahitya Akademi, the third such awardee in Telugu. I also thank the authorities of the Sahitya Akademi for their decision to confer the Fellowship on Seshendra, a decision which has been long overdue.

Seshendra Sarma's place as a modern Telugu poet and as a modern national poet rests on two accomplishments. According to our alankarikas, a great poet must possess both *pratibha* and *vyutpatti*, in a large measure. There are many modern Telugu poets who are endowed with *pratibha*, but very few who have read widely, experienced widely and understood the world and life in great depth. Seshendra is a scholar-poet, perhaps one of last few of that generation in modern Telugu literature. Secondly, he has cultivated an unconventional mode of expressing his thoughts, imagination and experience in Telugu which is unique and inimitable.

He published sodasi, a commentary on the *Sundarakanda* of the *Ramayana* in terms of the *yogasastra* and *mantrasastra*, drawing heavily on the Vedic and Upanishadic sources. He also did research on establishing that the composition of the *Ramayana* must have preceded that of the *Mahabharata* with internal evidence. His scholarship in Sanskrit literature has been widely acclaimed. And then he wrote a similar esoteric commentary

on *Nai.sadhi:yacarita* called *Swarnahamsa*. He wrote traditional poetry for some time and took to *vacanakavita* in the seventies. This is where he developed a unique style of his own. His diction and syntax are unusual, but still within the limits of Telugu grammar. He sometimes reminds us of Dylan Thomas who created new expressions in English like ‘a grief ago’. His thinking and imagery are not abstract but different. He creates new collocations, new relationships between subjects, predicates and objects, e.g.

ఒక అందమైన పోయెం అంటే / దానికి గుండె ఉండాలి / అది కన్నీళ్ళు కార్చాలి
క్రోధాగ్నులు పుక్కిలించాలి/వీడితులపక్షం అవలంబించాలి/
కాలపు బరువుల్ని మోయాలి

బ్రతకదానికి పద్యం ఒక / కోటబురుజు కావాలి
పద్యం మనిషి విజయానికి / ఒక జెండా అయ్ ఎగరాలి

For a poem to be beautiful/ it must have a
heart/ it must shed tears/
it must emit the fire of fury/ it must side with the
oppressed/it must pay its debt to humanity/
it has to bear the burdens of Time;
For a poem to survive / it must be like a fortress/
it has to become the flag/ of Man’s ultimate victory
(*A:dhunikabharatam*, p. 150).

Seshendra is a humanist to the core. His agony has been for the upliftment of the oppressed and the exploited. One does not have to hobnob with some kind of political ideology to have empathy with the poor and the oppressed. In the sixties and the seventies, nobody could be called a socially conscious poet unless he/she embraced or at least swore by communism and Marxism. Sri Sri was the dominating ideologue and the the model for young poets. Seshendra strayed into this line and called himself a *viplava kavi*, ‘a revolutionary poet’. How can one be a revolutionary poet unless he subscribes to or advocates the elimination of the so-called class enemies, the rich who are necessarily the guys who exploit the weaker to remain rich. No revolutionary poet has brought a revolution by simply eulogizing revolution.??

నీకోసం ఏదైవాడికి/నీవు ఋణగ్రస్తుడివి
మారుబ్బకు ఈశతాబ్దపు / అన్నార్తులంతా/ఋణగ్రస్తులు
- - -

అక్కోబరులో నేను పుట్టాను / అక్కోబర్లోనే విష్ణవం పుట్టింది
అందుకేనేనంటే భయపడుతుంది / తిమిరం
రవ్యాకాదుచైనాకాదు /విష్ణవం మాత్రం అజరామరం

You are indebted to those who shed tears for you
All hungry persons of this century are indebted to Marx
(*A:dhunikamahabharatam*, p. 156)

I was born in October
The Revolution was also born in October
So darkness is afraid of me
It is not Russia or China
Revolution is eternal
(Ibid, p. 161)

What make Seshendra a great poet are not these ideological
utterances as much as the
quality of his poetry itself:

Something that is relevant to the recent Kargil conflict:

నడుస్తోంది సేనావ్యూహం/ శత్రుశతఘ్నులు పేలుతున్నా
నడుస్తాడందులో సైనికుడు
ప్రకృవాడుకూలుతున్నా/ ఎందుకు చావాలని సైనికుడు
ఒకడూ అడగని యుద్ధం / అర్థహీనశబ్దాలతో /అల్లిన ఒకపద్యం

The army is marching in a row
Against the shelling of the enemies
The soldier continues to move on
Even if his next man had fallen
No soldier would ask why die
And why this war?
Like a poem composed of
Meaningless words.
(Ibid, p. 187)

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read

@ <http://kinige.com/kbook.php?id=546>